

# PARK PLAZAS

## Community Connections

**Spanish Teacher Olga Herrera**

### Passionate about Languages and Living in Santa Fe

by Jane Morris



Due to COVID-19 cases at her school, Olga is already back teaching classes online.

In 2008, a young teacher from Barcelona, Spain, applied to a Spanish/American teacher exchange program. With a background that included a bachelor's degree in English philology from the Universitat Autònoma in Barcelona, she must have been an attractive candidate. Better yet, she had received an Erasmus Grant to study at the University of Roehampton in London, where she lived for three years.

As fall of 2008 approached, **Olga Herrera** was headed for New Mexico, where she expected to spend the nine-month school year teaching Spanish at Santa Fe Prep.

Thirteen years later, she's still here. "I quickly fell in love with Santa Fe," Olga explains. "It's definitely my home." She adds that being a teacher allows her to spend summers in Spain, where her parents and brother live. "I have the best of both worlds."



Her Santa Fe Prep bio identifies Olga as "passionate about teaching and languages." These passions are clear from our conversation. She is fluent in five languages (Spanish, English, French, Italian and Catalan) and has studied a total of nine, including Russian and Basque. During an 18-month leave in 2015-2017, she earned her master's degree in audiovisual translation at Barcelona's Universitat Autònoma.

In early 2020, on Match.com, Olga met Denver-based construction worker **Joe Lavery**. Soon Joe was headed down I-25 for the couple's first date, which they spent hiking in the Santa Fe mountains. Afterwards, Olga cooked up a *tortilla de patata*, which is a Spanish potato omelet that is one of her culinary specialties.

It was pretty much love at first sight, leading to Joe's decision to join Olga in Santa Fe. As she points out, "It made better sense for Joe to move here, since I was well-established at Santa Fe Prep and he had more flexibility."

They moved to Cordero Plaza in the spring of 2020. "We looked at several neighborhoods," Olga tells me, "and as soon as we saw Park Plazas, we knew it was where we wanted to live." They both keep physically active, including regular workouts for Olga and Joe's daily runs on our network of walking paths.

With good jobs hard to come by during the pandemic, Joe ended up starting his own business, Lavery Home Improvements. "It was something I've wanted to do, and as it turned out, the timing was right," Joe says. "With Olga's encouragement, I've been staying really busy and doing better than I expected."

(At a neighbor's suggestion, I sought out Joe to help me with a few small projects this past spring. Getting up to leave our interview, around my dining table, Joe checked out some touch-up work he did in my kitchen, just to be sure it was holding up as expected. It was—and is!) (Please continue reading on page 2)



(Continued from page 1)

Our time together left no doubt that Olga is excited about returning to her classroom. It was impossible not to share her enthusiasm, and I enjoyed learning a little about her plans for the year. More than a decade after her initial nine-month teaching exchange, Olga is clearly one of those gifted educators who make Santa Fe Prep special.

And it also seems to me that we are fortunate to have Olga (and Joe) as part of our Park Plazas community.

## Park Plazas Management

# Forecast: Winds of Change Are Blowing

Because the distribution lists and editorial policies for *Park Plazas News (PPN)* and *Park Plazas Community Connections (PPCC)* are quite different,\* we wanted to be sure you're aware of important changes that will substantially affect how our community is managed. Here are pertinent excerpts (most paragraph breaks eliminated) from PPCSA president **Tom Carr's** most recent report, which was front-page news in the September issue of *PPN*.

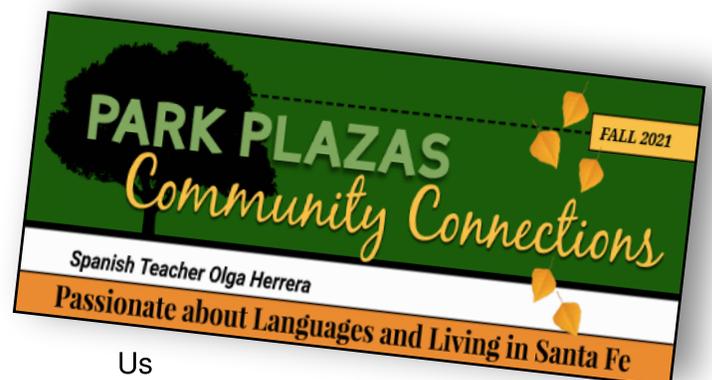
In October 2020, the Board engaged WestGate Properties, LLC to manage our community. We chose WestGate because it was locally owned, highly recommended and managed some 60 other condominium and homeowner associations. A primary reason we did this was we hadn't been able to recruit, train and retain effective managers. [We] felt that engaging an established, locally-owned management company would eliminate that problem and provide stability going forward. Simply put, that assumption has proven to be wrong. ... In time, the Board, with input from key volunteers and the Committee Chairs, concluded the experiment did not work out satisfactorily.

As I considered how to proceed, **Richard White** offered to become manager. I recognized him as an excellent candidate. Richard ... knows our community, its residents, practices and history; and for decades he has demonstrated a strong commitment to Park Plazas, volunteering thousands of hours over the years. ... On August 25 the Board unanimously resolved to employ Richard as manager effective October 15. He has committed to the position through 2023, providing much-needed stability for our community. ... Richard will resign from the Board at the September meeting and be replaced as Treasurer and Secretary. ... The Board will share details of the transition back to self-management in a timely manner. And, we will do our best to make this "re-transition" as seamless and easy for owners and residents as possible.

\**Park Plazas News (PPN)* is the official publication for the Park Plazas Community Services Association (PPCSA), which is our homeowner association. *Park Plazas Community Connections (PPCC)* is an unofficial publication produced by a small group of residents. Currently *PPN* is a monthly and *PPCC* is a quarterly. *PPCC's* mission (see page 8) centers around creating a warm, personal and engaging community-focused publication. It's all about people, highlighting what makes our neighbors interesting.



Them



Us

# GREAT VOLUNTEER GIGS

## Friends and Neighbors Help Make Fifth Annual Santa Fe TradFest a Resounding Success



Park Plazas had a strong showing at Santa Fe TradFest, which took place August 27-29 under the big tent at Camp Stoney. A full dozen volunteers from our community worked hard — in sunshine and showers — to ensure an unforgettable weekend. Two of these volunteers

also serve on TradFest's board, called Santa Fe Friends of Traditional Music. **Phil Vergamini** (Fresa) is Vice Chairman and **Bill Glaze** (Chamisa) is treasurer. Phil's wife **Nora Haskins** deserves admiration for her talent in recruiting so many valuable volunteers.

In the photo, **Barbara Cataldo** (Colina) and **John Durham** (Cereza) team up to welcome TradFest attendees. Not pictured: **Ralph Cole** (Orquidea), **Marcus Garcia** (Pajaro), **Laurie Glaze** (Chamisa), **Kathy Hargrave** (Junipero), **Art Ireland** (Relampago), **Monica and Scott Sweeney** (Orquidea).



Planning is already underway for the 6th annual Santa Fe TradFest, scheduled for August 26-28, 2022, at Camp Stoney. If you're interested in getting involved, contact Laurie at [laurieglaze@gmail.com](mailto:laurieglaze@gmail.com) or 713.829.7276.

## St. Vincent Hospital Auxiliary Needs YOU!

Are you looking for a rewarding volunteer opportunity? Especially if you're interested in learning more about Santa Fe's healthcare system, we've got one you'll want to explore: joining with the folks who give their time and talents to St. Vincent Hospital Auxiliary.

Our own **Laurie Glaze** currently serves as vice president of the Auxiliary, which means she is responsible for recruiting and onboarding new volunteers. Here is Laurie's message to Community Connections readers:

*Founded in 1951, St. Vincent Hospital Auxiliary supports and enhances the hospital's capacity to meet the healthcare needs of the people of Santa Fe and Northern New Mexico. When you walk through the doors of CHRISTUS St. Vincent Medical Center, the first person you see may be one of the 100-plus volunteers who share their time and talent by serving others.*

*Auxiliary volunteers are a vital part of CHRISTUS St. Vincent, providing a range of services throughout the hospital. There are many areas where volunteers work, including Surgery Waiting, Registration, Library and Coffee Services, Information Desks and Pet Therapy. Volunteers also create craft items such as holiday stockings for newborn babies, walker bags for therapy patients, and lap blankets and stuffed animals for pediatric patients.*

*Volunteers have set days and hours, with assignment areas determined to meet the needs of the hospital. During onboarding (orientation and training), which typically takes up to six weeks, new volunteers are introduced to HIPAA/privacy, customer service and other hospital policies.*

*Since its inception, St. Vincent Hospital Auxiliary has also donated over \$1.5 million to the hospital for a multitude of projects, including building renovations, nursing scholarships and purchases of innovative medical equipment.*

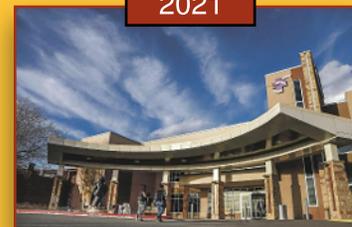
If you are interested in learning more, please contact Laurie at [laurieglaze@gmail.com](mailto:laurieglaze@gmail.com) or 713.829.7276.



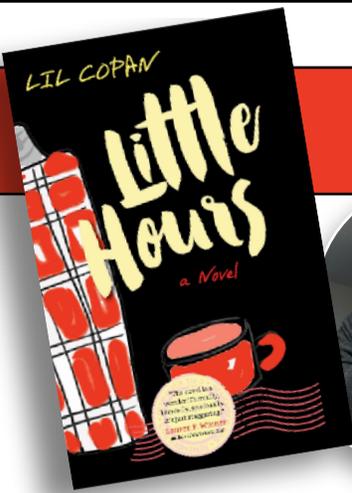
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2021



# Celebrating Lil Copan's *Little Hours*



In January 2018, longtime Bostonian **Lil Copan** and her partner, **Deborah Mrantz**, moved to their two-story townhome in Ristra Plaza. In June 2021, Lil's first novel, called *Little Hours*, was published. We congratulate Lil on this accomplishment—and with her gracious permission, we feature an excerpt from *Little Hours* in this issue of *Community Connections*.

Much of the book was researched and written before Lil came to Santa Fe, but she did final editing and even added a couple of

gap-filling letters right here in Park Plazas. When you read *Little Hours*, you'll understand why I quickly mention birdwatching from Lil and Deborah's balcony overlooking their tree-studded surroundings.

While *Little Hours* is her debut novel, Lil is no stranger to the written word. She studied at the University of Connecticut, earning degrees in art and creative writing. Her career includes decades of editorial work. She has been an arts columnist and has led workshops on spiritual writing and creative nonfiction. She has worked as a high-school English teacher and as a curatorial assistant in an art museum.

*Little Hours* is a book you won't want to put down. Lil tells the novel's story through an exchange of letters between two women: Miriam, a restless, frustrated middle-aged wife and mother, and Sister Athanasius, a nun with the monastic Sisters of Saint Hildegard of Bingen. Except for Miriam's first letter, contained in the book's Prologue, the novel comprises only the nun's letters, which typically summarize the questions Miriam has asked. The initial letter was inspired by a copy of *Sister Bird's Guide to Small Birds*, in which Miriam finds an invitation from the Massachusetts-based monastery that says they "gladly respond to questions about the life of birds and the life of faith."

The resulting correspondence, to quote the novel's back cover, makes "a book for birdwatchers, coffee drinkers, baseball fans, bumper-sticker readers, animal lovers and all those who care about life's most piercing, unanswerable, tender, humanizing questions."

As one reviewer wrote: "I read it straight through. I'm not confident that I even breathed while reading it. The novel is a wonder! Formally, literarily, and spiritually, it's just staggering. Wise and absorbing. Reading *Little Hours*, I had the all too rare experience of losing the self-conscious awareness that I was reading; I was, instead, simply and suddenly placed in a world that was both familiar and unfamiliar to me. What a gift."

Our excerpt presents Miriam's initial letter and the nun's first two letters, all dated March or April 2003. (The last letter in the book—300 pages later—is dated January 1, 2005.) I predict you'll enjoy this brief introduction to *Little Hours*, Lil's revelatory journey of the spirit.

– Jane Morris

## Prologue

March 23, 2003

Dear Sisters of St. Hildegard of Bingen,

*I am married with two teenage children. I'm 42 years old. Today I got thinking that I'm like a religious Sister, working and praying through each day in a big cycle that seems ridiculously endless. But then I don't know too much about nuns.*

*Last week I drove to the south shore of Massachusetts and passed through the town of Weymouth. It wasn't really on my way anywhere. I stopped at Tom's Feed & Seed. Maybe what I need is another bird feeder, I said to myself. I left with one suet and two nyjer feeders and a book called Sister Bird's Small Guide to Small Birds.*

*Then this morning I brought the kids to school. Left there and drove over to the Quabbin Reservoir near where I live, and sat. Turned the car off. Turned the car on. Turned it off again.*

*The feeders and book were still on the front seat floor. I read the section "About the Finches" and then looked at the last page of the book:*

The Sisters of Saint Hildegard of Bingen invite you to write us at Saint Hildegard Monastery, Plover Point, Weymouth, MA. We gladly respond to questions about the life of birds and/or the life of faith.

I'm writing this note now from my minivan, on the paper bag. So I wanted to ask about a couple of things—maybe my new interest in Catholic things is a calling? I'm a Baptist, so I'm not sure. And I have questions: Is there really birdwatching at the monastery? And, what do I do about my husband?

Maybe you can write to me. I'd like to know these things, other things, important things. Things about your monastery and how you live your lives. Maybe one day I could visit your little place in the world. I've always liked Gregorian chants.

Thank you,  
Miriam

## • • • • • By Way of Introduction • • • • •

7 April 2003  
Feastday of St. Brynach

Dear Miriam,

Mother Lourdes, our Prioress, asked me to write to you.

First, I would like to respond to the questions you asked: In regard to the note, *Is there really birdwatching in the monastery?* Yes, there is birdwatching at monasteries. Well, at least, our monastery. I thought I would address that question first as you seemed ever so concerned.

Here, at our community of the Sisters of Saint Hildegard of Bingen (Bings, some call us), we have a small parcel of land: a meadow surrounded by marsh grasses on the edge of a mudflat, and many birds enjoy their stay here, and they flock to our statue of Saint Francis, unofficial patron saint of birds. I think it worth taking vows if only to come to our tiny nature reserve, and commune with Saint Francis and the singular egret or heron who visit our bayside garden and mudflats.

As to your other question: *What do I do about my husband?* This is probably your main question, and a troubling one. The question, maybe, entailed in your turning the car off, turning it on, not knowing what to do. I can't imagine that it is so simple as the annoying habit of balled-up socks flung under the bed that one must retrieve? Or the washing of dishes, or dutiful prayer for the soul of the one entrusted to your care? Is there more you might like to tell me of the shape of your life?

At various and frequent points in our lives we all necessarily question our places in the world. *Go. Stay. Wait. Get a bird feeder. Find a good book. Patience.* All of these speak to us at different times.

Though our lives are devoted wholly to Christ, we Sisters also are learning to live intimately. Waiting. Doing. Sometimes questioning our place in the world. Here we are all given, along with our rhythm of prayer and our lives of devotion, works that we must do to share in the life of the monastery. And dishes, as our Sister Anne will tell you, is her spiritual service, along with prayer.

And those balled-up socks under the bed, well, Sister Patrick Gertrude will convey, with a sigh that lets you know she's interested more in the *clean* part of *cleaning*, that this forms her myriad trials. She is the hunter and gatherer of laundry for our community—who, though given a heightened sense of smell from our Gracious Lord, has also been tested to the utmost in this matter.

Though birdwatching is an activity some of us take great joy in, it cannot be the bulk of our days. But Sister Bird (your first friend in this religious community) is the one whose occupation is all things ornithological. You may be familiar with her popular book, *Sister Bird's Bird Guide to New England Shore Birds: A Book for Birders*. (Might she have fit in one more *bird*?)

And as you have interest in our life here, you'll want to be introduced to Sister Farm, too. We call her this, though her full spiritual name is Sister Burgundofara, after the French saint. (You can see the necessity of a moniker.) She tends to the land here. If you are starting from the bayside in, there's the water, then the marsh grasses, then a wide stretch of grass, then the monastery garden, then a little henhouse & barn.

Here, Sister Farm tends to the 2 cows (Jerseys), and 30 hens (Buff Orpingtons), 7 Icelandic sheep, and one corpulent pig (of questionable origin). She daily tests the patience of Sister Patrick Gertrude, whose olfactory system takes offense to all matters farm.

Along with our work is the life of contemplative prayer—offering a listening spirit to God. We spend many hours in the stone chambers of our chapel, chanting the psalms and hearing the birds respond in kind from the

outside. Praying with our small sisters, the birds, draws a heart close to our Lord as we watch the creatures live in simple praise. With hopes that this letter finds you also watching your friends the birds, and, too, that your spirit finds a way to the place of peace in your heart that your letter suggests is your deep desire. (And with hopes that this letter attends to your other questions about monastic life.)



Yours,  
Sister Athanasius, OSHB

20 April 2003

Dear Miriam,

That's the way it is in the world, isn't it? Your letter says so, exactly: *nervous, busy, lost, turned about, people, children, spouses wanting to find understanding with each other, though only able to hurt themselves and each other with a series of quick sparks.*

You write how you struggle daily with this. Here, so quiet a monastery along the bay, with the unseen lapping of the incoming tide—we bring ourselves to connection with the world. We are away from the world, but we are not away. We experience the same struggles in a different context.

Sister Farm, as your letter inquired, struggles with this especially, finding the little barn to be her true altar, her joyous and quiet sacrifice to God and his scurrying and snorting and thick uddered creatures.

But when she comes from her sanctuary of holy work to the chapel to pray what we call the Office, or the Hours, she sits next to Sr. Patrick Gertrude. Perhaps this seating arrangement is our Prioress's reminder to us that we may have our ecstatic smells or barnyard joys, but we must meet the other in the real world. The world where our habits rest inches from the other at prayer or sometimes touch, even when we cannot bear to offer each other the sign of peace, when we want our real peace to be somewhere else (me with my rambling thoughts or my pen) in this layered and prominent thing called Life With Others.

And so it is with you. And so it is with us as well.

And we attend to prayer. And we notice the way that the world shifts around us and shifts us around in it. But, Miriam, come away from your troubles with me a moment with this: 2 darting, fast-winged killdeer flutter of a life surprised. And the snowy egret, a Holy Ghost presence, as I think of it (only showing up at divine whim and hardly when you'd expect it) comes to the bay infrequently but gracefully.

And our hearts are warmed at the sight of this bird, who knows something of spiritual attention, inventiveness, and zig-zagging surprise. Miriam, your last letter was dear, telling me of your days (oh, that constant rain!), your heart, your children, your husband, Franklin (and that awful flood in your basement)—and, of course, who wouldn't have a fight over a broken sump pump?

Indeed, I would. That sort of pressure demands a good snarl between partners. I trust that all has worked itself out, that the sump is in place and that you had a lovely time of making up. In my early years and impassioned relationships, I knew the heat and dread and fire and fury of a good emotional brawl. And, too, the quiet grace of regained affection.

On another note, please do not apologize about short letters.

You surely have little time, but I am glad that you say you enjoy my letters. But be forewarned: the others in the monastery— especially Sister Farm who likes a short sentence—find my parentheticals and asides and commas a sore distress. So you are brave, my dear, to read through all the loops and endure the commas.

Fondly,  
Sister Athanasius, OSHB

PS You asked about our habits. What color are they? Well, I'd like to say they look like Capuchin habits, after which cappuccino was named. Wouldn't that be lovely and decadent, to have a coffee-colored habit? Alas, our habits are what one might call *workman blue*: the color of mechanics coveralls or the blue of heavy industry work pants. It's not the prettiest of the habits, yet they are functional. And as I have been strictly disallowing myself coffee now for 8 years, 2 months, and 3 days, it's probably better that our habits do not serve as a call toward temptation. Sure defeat, it would be, to see a sea of coffee color every day.



# Jane's Famous Bean Casserole

This is what I call a “dump” recipe—not exacting like a soufflé, but endlessly variable depending on your personal taste and the ingredients you choose. People always seem to enjoy it, going back decades, so it’s a good choice for a fall potluck. The one “essential” is a large (4-quart) shallow casserole dish or baking pan, preferably ceramic, like you’d use for lasagna.

- 2 15-oz cans Ranch Style Beans (original recipe)
  - 1 15-oz can Hormel or other “all-American” brand chili con carne (no beans)
  - 2-3 15-oz cans fire-roasted tomatoes (peeled and diced are best—store brand is fine)
  - 1 15-oz can pinto or other beans (Great Northern beans are another of my favorites)
  - 1 4-oz can diced green chiles (I typically use mild, but feel free to go hotter if you like)
  - 1 Medium yellow onion, peeled and coarsely chopped
  - 2-3 Fully cooked sausages (Opa’s Hatch Green Chile smoked sausages, which I recently found at Albertsons, are the best I’ve ever used for this recipe), cut in bite-sized chunks
- Chopped fresh cilantro (or other herbs of your choice) to taste  
Salt and pepper



Drain most of liquid from canned ingredients. Combine all ingredients, adding fresh herbs as desired, plus salt and pepper to taste. Bake at 350 degrees until bubbly, about an hour.

## Our Seller's Market Continues

# Demand is High, and So Are Prices

This update is from **Lise Knouse** (Clavel), our Park Plazas real estate specialist and generous *Community Connections* sponsor:

*Currently there are no active listings in Park Plazas!\* Inventory in Santa Fe County is still very low, although it is creeping steadily in the direction of more abundance. The number of properties on the market has risen from 224 in April to 345 the first week of September. I believe prices will continue to stay high unless something happens to rock the national economy. So far, persistent southwestern wildfires, Hurricane Ida and the withdrawal from Afghanistan haven't seriously rattled the financial system.*

*That being said, residential real estate markets are fluid and constantly changing. My team tracks local statistics weekly as the numbers become available. If you'd like more information, we would be happy to help.*

\*This was true on September 1. As of today, September 9, there is one active listing in Park Plazas. How quickly will it go under contract? Time will tell!



Lise Knouse & Associates  
Park Plazas Specialist  
505-501-3385

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## Patricia K. Luiken 1939-2021

Our friend, neighbor and talented wildlife photographer Pat Luiken (Cisne) died on August 12. She was 82 years old. Pat grew up in Steamboat Rock, Iowa, and was a graduate of Iowa State University. She taught high school and middle school in both Iowa and Colorado before moving to Santa Fe, where she worked as a certified financial planner. Pat owned her home in Park Plazas for more than 30 years.

Pat felt most at home in Santa Fe. It seems safe to say that Park Plazas contributed to her love of birds and wildlife, which blossomed into her passion for photography. She never tired of taking pictures of God's creatures and their settings, including her own backyard.

*Community Connections* was honored to have Pat as a contributor. In 2021, her photo essays featured uncommon backyard birds (Spring issue) and a bobcat family (Summer issue). Her beautiful pictures were accompanied by charming little essays. We loved working with Pat and are saddened that we won't have additional opportunities to showcase her new work.

Pat, may you rest in peace and may your memories be a blessing.

## Linking Up with the City of Santa Fe



**Jamie Cassutt** (Narciso), who represents our District 4 on the Santa Fe City Council, provided this helpful information:

**Alert Santa Fe** is the official emergency notification system used by the City of Santa Fe to communicate with city residents during emergencies. Follow the link to sign up: <https://www.smart911.com/smart911/ref/reg.action?pa=AlertSantaFe>.

Sign up to receive notifications from the City of Santa Fe including events and the District 4 Newsletter: <https://www.santafenm.gov/notifications>.



## Sharing News/Creating Connections/Building Community

### Mission Statement:

To produce a warm, personal, engaging and timely community-focused publication that creates and nurtures connections among all residents of Park Plazas. *Community Connections* is about people — highlighting what makes our neighbors interesting, makes them real, and makes others want to learn more about them.

[ParkPlazasCommunityConnections@gmail.com](mailto:ParkPlazasCommunityConnections@gmail.com)  
[www.ParkPlazasCommunityConnections.org](http://www.ParkPlazasCommunityConnections.org)

### PPCC Staff

Managing Editor: Laurie Glaze  
Content/Copy Editor: Jane Morris  
Layout/Design: Kathy Bell Hargrave

